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NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NATIONAL SIN:

THE SUBSTANCE OF

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTH SALEM,

WESTCHESTER CO., N. Y., NOVEMBER 20, 1856,

BY AARON L. LINDSLEY,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

NEW YORK:
PRINTED BY EDWARD O. JENKINS,
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CORRESPONDENCE.

To the

REV. A. L. LINDSLEY, A. M.:

Dear Sir:

The undersigned members of your congregation, being desirous that the views set forth in your Discourse on Thanksgiving Day should be more widely disseminated, do most respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication.

With sentiments of sincere regard,

We are, truly yours,

EDWIN BOUTON,	CYRUS LAWRENCE,
JOSEPH BENEDICT,	LEONARD B. TODD,
HARVEY MEAD,	ELI KEELER,
THOMAS GILBERT,	STEPHEN G. HOWE,
S. R. LOCKWOOD,	JACOB WEBSTER,
	AND MANY OTHERS.

LEWISBORO, DEC. 25, 1856.

SOUTH SALEM, JANUARY 2, 1857.

GENTLEMEN:

I should be indisposed to comply with the request in the foregoing note, if I had not been informed that it was very generally concurred in by the congregation. My objection arises from the fact, that I very seldom feel justified in discussing the topics presented in the discourse. But as it was originally prepared for the congregation, I feel that they are not without a claim upon it still.

Allow me to state, that the time which has elapsed since the delivery of the discourse, makes it difficult to recall the phraseology employed in the unwritten portion of it. I do not claim to have recalled it precisely, but the sentiments you will recognize as substantially the same. I had purposed to append some quotations, personal and historical, but finding that these would enlarge the pamphlet to an unexpected size, I omit them altogether.

In the fervent hope that the discourse may aid in giving a salutary direction to the thoughts of those who may peruse it, and thereby contribute, however humbly, to a wise and peaceful solution of the perplexing questions which agitate our Country, I commit it, though with much diffidence, to the press. The object of your request will then have been not altogether disappointed.

With acknowledgements for your favorable opinion, I subscribe myself,

Your Friend and Pastor,

AARON L. LINDSLEY.

TO MESSRS. E. BOUTON, AND OTHERS.

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MOST GRACIOUS LORD!

We humbly beseech Thee, to grant us hearts mindful of Thy past mercies toward this nation. Suffer us never to fall into unthankfulness and forgetfulness of Thy benefits publicly received. Be pleased to continue Thy fatherly guidance and direction of our ways; dissipate the counsels of such as labor to stir up the hearts of this people against one another; let their malicious practices be for their confusion. And grant Thou of Thy mercy, that love, concord and tranquility may continue and increase among the inhabitants of this land, even unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose gracious Gospel Thou dost call us to unity, peace and Christian harmony, the full perfection whereof we shall possess in Thy Kingdom; where all offences shall be removed, all iniquity suppressed, and Thy chosen ones endued with that perfect glory in which our Lord Jesus now reigneth; unto whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, evermore.—*Amen.*

[COMPOSED BY JOHN KNOX, THE REFORMER.]

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DISCOURSE.

Christian Brethren and Fellow-Citizens:

The mariner who is wafted by favoring gales upon a smiling sea, may eagerly look forward to a successful completion of his voyage: but when contrary winds compel him to traverse, or a gale drives him far off his course, he must make frequent observations, consult his charts, keep his eye on the compass, and bring into busy operation the principles of the nautical art. And when clouds obscure the heavens by night and by day, frustrating every attempt to ascertain the ship's course, what resort has he as he anxiously gazes into the thickening gloom, but with the utmost circumspection to apply all his skill and experience at every accessible point, and await the issue with a confiding trust in Him who "rides on the tempest and directs the storm?"

I confess to you that the condition of our Country is aptly pictured in my own mind by a noble ship driven before a tempest; and the obligations of our countrymen are like the obligations of a ship's company tossed on treacherous waves the sport of adverse winds. It behoves us then as patriots to resort to fundamental principles, determine our bearings, and ascertain our points of departure from the meridian upon which our national craft was sailing, before she was driven from her chartered course into the seductive currents of personal gain and national aggrandizement. In this investigation, we are supplied with an authentic and reliable directory. It is the Chart of God.

I have chosen therefore, as the guide to our reflections at this hour, the words recorded in the Book of Proverbs, the fourteenth chapter and the thirty-fourth verse:

"Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

This passage contains a forcible contrast, the first portion of which requires but little explanation. Personal Righteousness is

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the practice of justice in every department of life. It is the rendering to others whatever is lawful and equitable. It is the honorable fulfilment of engagements. It is the prosecution of lawful ends in a lawful way. Justice is a moral principle; righteousness is a moral act. The latter is the expression or the outworking of the former. Righteousness is justice operating.

National Righteousness is the same cardinal virtue on a broader scale. It is the operation of justice in the hands of the Country. A just government marks its intercourse with other nations by uprightness in its commercial relations, and by the faithful observance of treaties; and its domestic administration, legislative, judicial and executive, is characterized by the same scrupulously correct and honorable policy. A righteous administration of government is therefore always founded upon the principle of even-handed and incorruptible justice.

But inasmuch as government is established among men for the benefit of the governed, a righteous administration of its functions will therefore promote the best interests of all classes of citizens, and every section of the country. It will frame just and equal laws, cherish industry, encourage virtue, suppress vice, throw its powerful shield over the innocent, punish the criminal, relieve the oppressed, protect and honor religion, and revere Almighty God, the Supreme Ruler who has ordained governments as His agents among men.

Government is the constituted guardian of the natural and civil rights of its subjects. Natural rights cannot be created by the State: they are the gift of God. The State acknowledges them, and defines their just limitation. Civil rights may be enacted by the State; but natural rights are the only just foundation of these: for the God-given rights of man *are inalienable.* A righteous government protects them from encroachment at home and defends them against aggression from abroad. The loyal citizen of such a country dwells in peace. He prosecutes his lawful avocations, while the government protects him in the possession of his most cherished rights, among which are *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

Government necessarily reacts upon the people whom it serves. Hence a righteous administration of Public Affairs affords a benign encouragement to industry and virtue and an honorable fame, by dispensing justice to all, maintaining order and stability, and preserving inviolate its own character for faithfulness and incorruptibility. Thus it promotes individual welfare, and moral and intellectual elevation. Such a government is enthroned upon the moral judgment of its subjects, and enkindles patriotism in every breast; and it secures the respect and confidence of the world. Its moral

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influence is in proportion to its righteousness; and its citizens in foreign lands are clothed with its moral power. It is endowed with all the elements of life and progress and perpetuity.

So true is it that "RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION."

The truth contrasted with this in the text, is expressed in language not difficult to understand. "*Sin is a reproach to any people.*" Differing but not contrary views are maintained respecting the meaning of the word translated *reproach;* but without rehearsing these, it is sufficient to observe, that the words of our version are regarded as accurate enough for practical uses. I think the full meaning would appear by making the points of the contrast more prominent: *Righteousness exalts a nation; but Sin degrades any people.*

Personal immorality is corrupting from its very nature; and that which corrupts the mind *debases the man.* The more flagrant the immorality, the deeper the degeneracy. Immorality and crime are not always but very often joined together in a debauched alliance of profligacy and shame. Impiety, injustice, oppression, and every form of iniquity, tend only to infamy and ruin. Sin is contagious. Unrestrained transgression in a few, weakens the bonds of virtue in many, and makes the timid culprit bold. Law loses its majesty, and license creeps through its meshes. The public, familiarized to abuses in the administration of law, learns to look with indifference upon the frequency of crime; a turbulent populace rapidly swelling in numbers, clamors for freedom from restraint, and runs riot into excesses; and then the end is nigh.

As it is with society, so is it with nations. A corrupt supervision of Public Affairs, brings any country into contempt at home and dishonor abroad. It is the helm of state in the hands of treachery. A violation of treaty obligations, an unscrupulous thirst for national aggrandizement, public defalcations, the unfaithful discharge of official trusts, the oppression of the weak and defenceless, the rancorous spirit of party, the misconstruction of constitutions and statutes—all these show the degradation of any government, and exhibit an unmistakable tendency to dissolution. For these are national crimes which call to Heaven for vengeance; and Heaven will avenge.

Our text then teaches that National Righteousness is the guardian of national honor, and the promoter of national prosperity and peace; and that National Iniquity terminates in national disgrace, misery and ruin.

The Bible contains much instruction on the subject of civil government. And to expound its lessons without regard to parties, is not *political preaching,* in the ordinary usage of the phrase. Politics relate to the *policy,* or course of procedure which should be adopted in the management of Public Affairs. As citizens hold different

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views in relation to the policy to be pursued by the government, they range themselves on opposite sides, and thus become *partisans*. But on this as on every subject, there are general principles which are held in common by good men of all parties,—some branches of moral science and political science are closely interwoven, and cannot be effectively treated of apart,—and these may therefore be very properly discussed in the pulpit on suitable occasions, but always with reference to the welfare of men, and the glory of God. There should be religion in the State, and religion in politics. To divorce them is to repudiate God, and make a league with hell. On the other hand, a political religion is a curse. By partisan preaching the pulpit is sunk as much lower than "the stump" as it legitimately stands above it. And we ask no privilege to advocate in this place the claims of any party but the party of the RIGHT, which maintains the claims of humanity and the claims of God. All true patriots belong to the party of the Right. No reasonable man will take exceptions to such a course as this.—Now that the great contest for the Presidency is past, I propose to review in a candid and impartial manner, some of our Country's claims to that Righteousness which exalteth a nation, and inquire how far we may have incurred the reproach which follows national Sin; and then examine our duty to our Country and to God, in the existing condition of national affairs.

In the advancement of our Country's *material* welfare, we still find powerful incentives to Thanksgiving and Praise to the Giver of every good. Our Country as a whole was probably never more prosperous in all that pertains to the production of the great staples of commerce, and the consequent diffusion of the necessaries, comforts and enjoyments of life. The extent of our Country, its mineral resources, the productions of its forests and its waters, its fertility of soil, its agricultural interests, its inventive talent, its mechanical skill, the variety and utility of its manufactures and arts, its mercantile enterprise, its facilities for travel and transportation, its vast commercial marine,—all distinguish our land as the most highly favored in point of material advantages that the sun shines upon, and offer in the aggregate the greatest incitements to industry, the acquisition of a competency, and the accumulation of wealth. And these three results are in a remarkable degree developed. Every man can find an honest employment in our Country; every man can acquire a homestead and a competency if he chooses; and every man has access, so far as a just regard to equal rights can open the way, to the avenues to wealth. These are great advantages, unequalled in any land. But they are not all indispensable to the highest interests of man. These provide for material welfare; but

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beyond the simple supply of nature's wants, they are means to a higher end. *That end is the promotion of the intellectual, moral and spiritual well-being.*

And the provision which is made for moral and religious cultivation in our Country is also abundant and unsurpassed. This provision is another reason for Thanksgiving to Almighty God.

A proper regard for these facilities of salutary progress, and a due improvement of them, would be our nation's most appropriate Thank-offering, and most acceptable to God. *The surplus product of our material advantages should be devoted to intellectual and moral elevation.* The superfluities of life should be held in trust for the higher objects of life. And the proportion of responsibility is in proportion to the superfluity. The amount of means to do good, is the measure of obligation to do good. This is a divine law. For "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." This department of duty should not be confined to the limits of optional charity, where a common delusion places it. To do good is as truly a work of righteousness, as to be just and faithful. It is as much of the nature of stringent moral obligation, as any other which our Maker has enjoined upon us. The obligation is universal and unchangeable: its application is regulated by opportunity and proportion of means. Its indefiniteness in the latter particular, is the innocent occasion of its frequent violation. The observance of this rule is therefore obedience to a leading rule of righteousness. It exalteth the person who observes it; and when it is regarded by the people, it exalts the nation whose citizens they are. It gives it a just and honorable fame among the brotherhood of nations, and a lofty place in the annals of the world.

Now have we as individuals, and therefore as a nation, consistently observed this rule of righteousness, and thus far commended ourselves to the favor of Him who has bestowed upon us all these resources of comfort and wealth, and the consequent means of personal elevation in the scale of rational beings, and of exalted usefulness to fellow-creatures? Would to God a conscience void of offence might sanction an affirmative response! There are individual examples of the consecration of means to the purposes of a higher life. But in what relation to this unquestionable duty would this inquiry find the mass of our countrymen? Would it not discover them in almost universal transgression? This sin is a burning reproach to any people. And the more prevalent the sin, the deeper the reproach. The prevalence of the sin must be determined by the amount of means to work righteousness. And was there ever a land where the means were so universally diffused, and the calls for their beneficent employment so numerous and so pressing as in our own?

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Look abroad over our Country. What a diversified scene of exciting and restless activity fatigues the eye! Almost all classes are driven by a common impulse. The busy hand and the busy foot of toil are everywhere. The country is all astir under the rapid and effective movements of labor; and the myriad sounds of the cities respond to the farmer's voice and the herdman's call, multiplying echoes over countless fields; the water-courses are vexed with innumerable keels, and the valleys are vocal with the mingled din of manufactures endlessly diversified; the mountains tremble in the miner's blasts, vomiting the minerals hoarded in their rock-ribbed recesses; far away the woodman's axe resounds through the dim archways of primeval forests; and boundless prairies are untilled solitudes no longer. Then to demonstrate the mutual dependence of human occupations, we behold the interminable system of water communication on seacoast and river provided by the beneficent Creator, together with the vast labyrinthine network of railways constructed by man, employed to bear away and afar the surplus products of industry and skill, enriching the great depositories of trade, while leaving a generous tribute along every route of transportation, and furnishing employment to a great number of heads and hands, from the laborer whose capital is vested in his strong muscle, to the merchant whose ships frequent remotest bays. What varied combinations thus arise out of extreme diversities of occupations! The producing classes in turn become consumers; the thinking brain leaves its cloistered study, and helps the working hand; and every calling affords remuneration for the investment of capital and skill, which makes the poor rich and the rich no poorer. Surely indolence is not an American vice, nor pauperism an American institution!

But whence this universal activity? It springs from a desire for acquisition; a propensity just in its normal condition, evil in its abuse. It thus becomes a *consuming thirst for gain;* a despotic and insensate impulse, which urges to the violation of all the laws of the human constitution by posting on for success, regardless of the means employed, the obligations involved, or the consequences entailed. Hence the reckless expenditure of the vital forces by stretching both mind and body upon the rack of toil, resulting in chronic maladies, premature imbecility, or early death. Hence the eager resort to the credit system, to do business with other people's goods and live on other people's money; and having run a brief career of fashionable folly, conveniently to fail, and grow rich by the operation—resulting in the loss of reputation and ruin of character. Hence the invention of tricks of trade to defraud a purchaser or outstrip a competitor. Hence the employment of irresponsible

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agents, whose chief recommendation consists in an aptness to drive a good bargain, or a fast train. Hence the respect paid to prosperity which has mounted to its "bad eminence" through dishonor —to placeholders without character or capacity—to wealth without worth. Hence, in fine, the general adoption of the rule of expediency, which fluctuates by circumstances, or is graduated by selfishness or baseness, instead of the rule of righteousness which never changes, and which appeals from selfishness to conscience and from the opinion of men to the arbitrament of God.

And what is the end contemplated in these never-ceasing exertions of body and brain? If all this activity were indispensable to secure the means of subsistence, it would carry its justification along with it. But the end in view is removed far beyond this. The thirst for gain is not slaked at the fountains of necessity or competency. And the superfluity it seeks is not for the promotion of intellectual and moral self-elevation—not for the relief of virtuous want in others—not for the endowment of public charities—not for the dissemination of knowledge, art, religion among the families and nations of the earth. Its aim is *self-aggrandizement;* its end is *personal display.* The miser's cupidity is not a ruling lust in our Country. Hoarding is the vice of old men; squandering is the vice of modern society. Extravagance marks almost all classes, high and low. Driven by the common impulse, the rich and poor alike are on a career of reckless prodigality. Disdaining the sobriety of former times, when a less gaudy and conceited style prevailed, the society of our day runs with precipitate haste after native and imported extravagances in habitations, personal apparel, entertainments and amusements, whose chief recommendation is their exorbitant price, whose principal charm is novelty, and whose fruit is first a paltry boast, and after that dissatisfaction and disgust. The ostentation of "high living" is thus found in close alliance with "mean thinking." Wealth is sought with intense covetousness, for the indulgence of the lower propensities; and when it is acquired, often by resorting to base expedients, it is profusely lavished to gratify a depraved appetite for costly luxuries, and an uncultivated taste for *fine things.* Hence the rage for foreign works of art, foreign fashions, and foreign manners; and with these importations are inevitably blended the introduction of *foreign morals* too—the execrable vices of the licentious capitals of Europe—to demoralize American society, under the color of refinement and civilization. Nameless abominations are these—which must needs be spoken of in a foreign dialect to make them exquisitely polite and captivating.

Under such combined fascinations, the virtuous simplicity of former days is rapidly giving place to an *artificial life* which permits no

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restraints upon its demands. It lays all resources under contribution. It tasks labor and taxes capital to the utmost. It drains the country of its products, and then fails at the rate of millions to balance the account with our foreign trade. The exportation of bullion to Europe is carried on almost without intermission to pay for luxuries and fancy goods, imported in profusion to satisfy the imperious demands of vanity and lust. We are the laughing stock of Europeans. Anything will sell in America, if it has a novel style however gairish, and a foreign label however unutterable. Genuine refinement is smothered amid chemical perfumes, good taste is put to the blush upon a pyramid of furbelows and flowers, civilization plays attendance upon French cooks and dancing-masters, and chastity dwells among nude statuary.

Such prodigality will ruin any nation. All the gold of California cannot save it. The late war and the partial failure of crops in Europe have postponed only in part the consequences of our extravagance and waste. These calamities in Europe created an unprecedented activity in American trade and commerce, by soliciting supplies which our country was able to furnish. Such demands are necessarily transient. These will cease ; but the consequences of an unwonted expansion of trade unprovided with adequate checks and balances, will follow. The wanton waste and extravagance, the appetite for expensive luxuries and pleasures, and the resort to fraudulent expedients to gratify these, will not depart. Public credit abroad will be overthrown, and confidence at home, the cornerstone of business, will fluctuate and fall.

The sin of luxurious living has always been the curse of prosperous nations. Its source is a misuse of the abundant blessings of Providence, and a practical denial of accountability to God. The general diffusion of wealth without the counterpoise of moral responsibility to guide its employment is essentially enervating, and subversive of all manliness and all virtue. When this comes to be the ordinary condition of a people, corruption is already at the pith, and the whole mass must swiftly decay and perish. This is the teaching of all history. No power can arrest its dissolution; for the Most High, in dealing with nations as well as with individuals, hath declared "*The kingdom and nation that will not serve me,* SHALL PERISH." The retributions of Providence are ordinarily seen in permitting the development of the legitimate results of transgression, which are like the tree and its fruit. Hence, whatsoever a nation soweth, that shall it also reap ; and if it sows to the flesh, it must reap corruption. The persistent abuse of the means of self-improvement and beneficence unavoidably grows downwards into self-abasement, poverty, and want. The couch of pleasure is a bed

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of down upon a bed of thorns. An abused conscience generates a scorpion with torment in its sting.

We think there can be recognized, in the prevalent misuse of pecuniary means, the infliction of retribution upon parental unfaithfulness. The fathers of the present generation of active men—and their fathers too—were men of toil. Our Country shows it to-day. The progress of this land in material improvement since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, is probably without a parallel in the annals of the world. Our ancestors, the founders of this Republic, knew the value of labor, *and the value of its fruits.* The necessities of their condition taught them serviceable lessons, which their successors appear in a great measure to have forgotten. Economy in those days was regarded as a cardinal virtue. But it was likewise abused. It too often degenerated into parsimony. And yet property was frequently put to highest uses then. Their sanctuaries, colleges, public charities, and other useful and benevolent endowments, surpass in value, we venture to assert, the boasted munificence of to-day, due allowance being made for the proportion of means. And the pecuniary sacrifices which our fathers made to maintain the struggle for Independence, needs no laudation. The cause was great, and great men there were to sustain it. Notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that the economy of the past age often stiffened into penuriousness. Money was too much regarded as an end in itself, and not as means to an end. Old America was a hoarder: he toiled hard to lay up. Young America is a spendthrift: he works day and night to squander. The close-fisted parsimony which cheapened the comforts of life and narrowed education to a naked utility, which frowned upon charity, denied innocent recreation, and discountenanced the cultivation of taste lest it might lead to expenditure, was disdainfully cast aside, when the wonderful facilities of our day opened an easy access to wealth. Proper instructions in relation to the *uses* of money and the responsibilities of stewardship, would have saved multitudes from the sin of squandering and the degradation of resorting to dishonorable expedients to keep up appearances, when their real condition was worse than bankruptcy. The intense pursuit of gain was the lesson taught, and eagerly learned; but the object of its pursuit was discarded, and no elevated and unselfish motive supplied its place. The early inculcation of *liberality* would in due time have pointed out the golden mean which intersects the extremes of avarice and prodigality. But the absence of this generous principle is sadly evident in the transitions which take place under the intoxications of money-getting in our day, from the parsimonious savings of honest gains aforetime, to the lavish expenditure of riches rapidly and often unscrupu-

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lously acquired. Covetousness is at the bottom of both : the end in view is widely different. And herein is that proverb true, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

The absorbing pursuit of any mercenary end brings about by a moral necessity, the degradation of the moral sentiments. And thus human concerns come to be important only as they bear a relation to the market value of stocks and staples. The rules of trade are the rules of life, and the rate per cent. is the rate of interest in fellow man. This moral debasement makes success the higher law, and treats a covenant obligation as a rope of sand, when the convenience ceases for which it was assumed. Hence the ease of a pecuniary failure, when men grow rich by publishing themselves too poor to pay their creditors ; and hence the deplorable indifference with which the public have come to look upon breaches of trust, and criminal abuse of mercantile confidence, which offers a premium to dishonesty, and renders an easy chastisement or none at all to skilful fraud.

But the "reproach" which attaches to this "sin," is not confined to individual and social life. It exerts directly and indirectly an incalculable influence upon the Public Affairs of the Country. The moral consequences of the universal thirst for gain is felt in all the departments of government. As its selfish ends induce the disregard of personal and social duties, so they lead to the neglect and violation of civil and political obligations. Its intense application leaves no time to devote to the common interests of citizenship. Gain asks to be let alone in the prosecution of its selfish ends, and relinquishes the highest aims of government to other hands. Add to this, the indifference of many good men to the honors of office, their aversion to partizan wrangling, and their criminal neglect of political duties, and the wide-spread corruption of politics, proceeding from opposite sources, is explained. But that disregard of these obligations which attend the vehement pursuit of gain is less excusable than any other, because the defence which it sets up is entirely selfish. Men who have a taste for serving the people, and a disrelish for labor, push themselves forward ; and demagogues are thus lifted into place and power. The injuries which such men are capable of inflicting upon the Country are incalculable ; for it is never safe to confide important interests to corrupt hands. No barrier is impregnable to their insidious assaults. They reduce the science of politics to a contraband trade in offices and emoluments. The safeguards of liberty which patriotism would vigilantly defend, they covertly invade, or openly disregard.

Constitutions and laws may, for a while, withstand the aggres-

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sions of bad men in power ; but history furnishes a warning commentary upon the facility with which the best institutions may be totally perverted and overthrown by unfaithful functionaries. Nor are these examples limited to political institutions. The trusts confided to churches and colleges and public charities—justly regarded as more sacred than political trusts—have often been violated under a specious appearance of fidelity to the letter of the obligation. Our institutions possess no inherent properties to preserve them from a similar fate ; and the danger of their perversion is most imminent when their management is entrusted to designing and irresponsible executives. If the command of the citadel is in the hands of traitors, the gates will be open to the enemy in an hour of slumbering security. Corrupt functionaries, occupying the seat of authority, can successfully defy all constitutional efforts to dislodge them long enough to destroy every chartered right, and violate every trust.

Neither can political parties save our Country. They act a very important part in the affairs of government. Directed by patriotic principles, they are guardians of public welfare. They catechise the aspirants after office, watch the agents of government, and recompense delinquents at the ballot-box. They dissect the principles and ventilate the pretensions of every seditious faction. The Country is safe while a highminded patriotism is diffused among their ranks. But when attachment to party supplants love of country, and every species of abuse and fraud is practised to secure a partisan triumph —when leaders are unprincipled and corrupt, and their followers are blindly led—the object of political parties is subverted, and they become instruments of stupendous mischief. The animosities of partisan strife are diffused like a virulent poison through all the agencies employed. Political conventions and speeches, newspapers and pamphlets, legislative debates and personal controversies, all share in the bitterness and hatred poured forth against political opponents, who are at least as honorable gentlemen and as pure patriots as their revilers.

In the present state of things, it seems impossible to raise a party founded upon true liberty and righteousness, and keep it together long enough to give it the ascendancy. The spirit of '76 and '87 has been again and again revived, and great expectations indulged in view of the numbers who have immediately enlisted under its banners. But the men who should have stood in the van, and marshalled the ranks, were too intent upon gain, or too averse to political exertion ; and the management fell upon professional politicians, whose merits had not been appreciated by their old associates. The attempt to carry it forward by the foul machinery employed in other parties, has resulted in defeat ; and thus reforms imperatively demanded in muni-

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cipal, state and federal administrations have been abandoned, or indefinitely postponed.

If "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," the men of our day are refusing to pay it. In their opinion the price is too high. Enough for them to watch the stock-market and the price-current; while liberty is watched with an evil eye by political hucksters, who purchase license in administrative halls, and barter indulgences and rights under that sacred name.

We cannot forbear to notice another element of "reproach" which originates in the FATAL PASSION OF THE DAY, as the Emperor of France justly characterizes the profligate spirit of speculation which is everywhere prevailing. The extravagance and knavery which attend it, find their way into the administration of government. Public Affairs were conducted aforetime upon an economical basis. This has been our boast. The *cost* of government in our land has been in favor of republican institutions; but this argument against monarchy is shifting fast against us. No other result could be looked for. So intimate are the relations which subsist between our people and our rulers, that the style of expenditure maintained by the former will be speedily adopted by the latter. The golden mean which holds the balance between penuriousness and prodigality, must be observed in society, in order to retain it in the government; for the customs of society in this particular, will always turn the key of the public treasury. Salaries sufficient for honest men will be ascertained to be inadequate; then will follow costly gifts from without (which the law calls bribery), embezzlement of public funds, and general depletion of the treasury; a spirit of official recklessness, which squanders the public revenues, is soon manifest, which cannot be expelled so long as the habits of the people give it countenance. When citizens yield to the despotic sway of the "fatal passion," no effective rebuke can be administered to public profligacy, or malfeasance in office. A change of parties will be only a change of "platforms," not of aims; a change of management, not of expenditure; a change of men, not of morals. A mercenary and voluptuous people not only cover themselves with infamy, they also tempt their successors into profligacy and dishonor, and instigate to flagrant crimes in official stations. *When the mass is corrupt, the body politic must perish.* SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE.

The opinion is sometimes expressed, that a remedy for these evils exists in the nature of the enterprises of the present day, operating like a safety-valve upon a high pressure of steam. These are indeed grand, varied, and attractive, beyond all precedent. The immense slopes laved by two oceans, the intermediate valleys and mountain ranges, the allied domain of thirty-one States, with territory

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enough to swell the number to fifty, stretching away in the sublime magnitude of a Continent, are the *home-field* of American industry, talent, and skill; and in the eye of American enterprize, no land is so remote and no sea so solitary as to prohibit access to American exploration and commerce. A race naturally inventive and acute, as persevering as energetic, as self-confident as capable, stimulated alike by difficulties and by dangers, equally unsubdued by disasters and unsatisfied by successes—finding the highways of the world on either vast shore, boldly project and push forward undertakings on a scale and in a variety unknown to States of an origin so recent and of available means so limited, and in some sublime features unrivalled among the nations.* They take a vast wilderness in hand, and in a few seasons transform it into fruitful fields, intersect it by roads and railways, dot it with villages and embryo cities, establish government, introduce education, art and science, found colleges, dedicate churches, and snapping its leading-strings, create an independent nationality—the former work of a century accomplished in a day.

Moreover, the condition of things in our country and the world is in a degree never known before, adapted to develope all the resources, and excite all the activities of such a race. All things are in motion, or easily moved. Inertia is a physical property well nigh exploded in practice. The world is a vast laboratory, in full operation. Human sagacity discovers little therein besides the disorganization of things that are—the disruption of old affinities, and the recombination of all things upon new bases. But the hand of a never-slumbering Providence moves forward all these changes; and the race best qualified by energy, intelligence, and capacity, seizes the instruments, works upon the new material, and turns it all to account. The abundance and vastness of existing opportunities, acting upon a people free to embrace them, and predisposed to engage in them, under a government which reflects the prevailing spirit, and obeys the popular will, stimulate the enterprizes and create the speculations which make our Country the theatre of over-strenuous and restless activity.

But it is impossible that these should furnish a remedy for the disorders of which we have spoken—unless, indeed, a malady and its cure are one and the same; for the facilities afforded to enterprise and speculation are the proximate occasions of the insatiable pursuit of gain. These excite the thirst to fever heat, by the promise of success entirely disproportioned to the means invested, and the time employed. In short, the elements of novelty and adventure

* E. G. The Government Expedition to Japan, and the resulting Treaty; the Grinnell-Kane Expedition, the joint enterprise of Government and one citizen.

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which enter largely into many of these opportunities on the one hand, with the stable element of affluent returns for regular investments on the other, satisfy the conditions coveted by the extremes of the business classes ; and these elements mutually kindle an unparalleled excitement in every department. The nature of the enterprises of the times is therefore not a safety-valve for reduction, but fuel for the increase : it is a principal occasion in the production of the evils to which we have adverted.

But a comprehensive view of the field we are surveying, compels us to take another step. In our Country, not only the prevailing dispositions, but also the prevailing pursuits of the people, inevitably give character to legislation, and the administration of government. Hence the tendencies of the times assume an importance of the gravest significance. The pursuit of gain for personal ends is expanded into a passion for NATIONAL AGGRANDIZEMENT. Professional politicians are among the first to discern such tendencies, and make the most of them. They skilfully touch the keys of popular passions, and manufacture public opinion to serve the occasion. A false and wicked mode of enlarging our territory is thereby justified under the specious plea of "extending the area of freedom"—a plea which carries immense weight with many honest minds who ardently desire the propagation of liberal institutions among all nations, but whose zeal betrays them into the advocacy of the iniquitous measures concocted by political tacticians, at the instigation of interested parties. Much of the eloquence vented on this subject would be struck dumb if the ulterior object fell short of annexation to our already overgrown territory. "The extension of the area of freedom" would lose all its popularity, if our sovereignty were not to go abreast with it, step by step. This will be sufficiently evident, upon examining the real motives which control these zealous propagandists of liberty. The real motives are not often apparent in the fervor of partizan declamation ; but they are more plainly avowed in the general discussions which take place among the people. In short, the "extension of the area of freedom," is a formula synonymous with the *extension of the area of trade.* It is a French cover to an Anglo-Saxon purpose. It is a pretext ingeniously framed for popular effect. It is a deception hitherto successfully imposed upon the multitude who put their consciences in the keeping of political leaders, and their faith in convention platforms. The formula has a philanthropic sound ; but the ring of coin is the key-note. Its synonym displays the true ground of every scheme of annexation recently accomplished or proposed. In the purchase of Louisiana (A. D. 1803), the leading idea was the security of boundaries, although the extension of trade was not without weight. The sources of the Mississippi were

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in our own domain, while its outlet was in the possession of another power. Prudential reasons of high moment justified the acquisition of the territory watered by that immense artery, and contiguous to its discharge into the gulf. Its acquisition was, therefore, deemed indispensable to the security and prosperity of our Western possessions. By the same means, immense facilities were provided for every department of business. The purchase of Florida (A. D. 1819) was justified upon grounds relating to the protection and security of boundaries ; and the motive was frankly avowed. No *solid* reasons affecting the security of domain could be alledged for subsequent acquisitions ; and the advantages to trade openly avowed were a consideration too obviously selfish to carry the vote of a great people, or to justify extreme measures in the eyes of the world. Hence the invention of a figure of speech, professing devotion to liberty,—a devotion like that which Roman legions carried on their eagles, when they remorselessly imposed *their* liberty upon subjugated nations.

This famous formula is the great staple in political theatres ; its synonym triumphs in commercial circles. The club-room and the counting-house meet in a cordial coöperation. Demagoguism and Trade unite in developing "manifest destiny!" And we are thus *working out our destiny*, which will be apparent in due time. It will be a luminous manifestation of the unchangeable truths, that RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION, and that SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE.

The formula finds favor and advocacy in every section of the country ; but it is interpreted to suit different latitudes. At the North the advantages to commerce and manufactures are displayed as the result of any proposed accession of territory ; at the South, it is the same plea, quoting a different class of staples—a commerce in cotton and slaves. GAIN is the ruling consideration, and the advocates of territorial enlargement, intent upon their purpose, move agencies seductively appealing to sectional interests ; and thus the strong incentives of personal selfishness serve to enlist all portions of the Country, and make the measure popular and national. A vicious political machinery, ready for propulsion in any direction in which its masters may engineer it, is brought to bear against any respectable minority in whatever quarter it may exist. But perhaps no single fact more plainly denotes the general demoralization of politics, than the fact that this iniquitous machinery is permitted to prevail against the convictions of a majority. By these processes, Texas was incorporated with our Union. Our limits forbid an extended discussion of this event. The annexation was accomplished against the solemn remonstrances of the best and wisest men in all

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parts of the country, who predicted calamities which were speedily realized. The measures adopted to secure it were unconstitutional and fraudulent; and the Country was thereby plunged into an iniquitous war, not in obedience to the will of a great majority, but contrary to it, and afterwards agitated from centre to circumference upon the subject of admitting independent slave States into the Union. All that our Country could honorably desire, could have been gained without shedding a drop of blood, and without violence to the public peace. It was only a question of time. But Gain and Politics struck hands with Slavery, and Righteousness and Honor fled.

The success which attended these proceedings imparted a fresh impulse to other projects for "extending the area of freedom." In the flush of victory, its advocates believed that their fondest dreams might be realized; and they turned their eyes eagerly upon Cuba, lent a helping hand to land-pirates in Central America, and concocted the scheme of "popular sovereignty" to beguile free territory into the embrace of slavery, as elucidated in the brief and bloody history of Kansas.

Large numbers at the North are induced to advocate these plots: many from vicious political alliances; a smaller number from benevolent but mistaken views; and not a few from the consideration of commercial interests. These classes have one thing in common: the denial of the atrocious wrong involved, and the disregard of the consequences of unrighteousness. An insensate impulse drives them forward in the employment of expedients which violate international law, public honor and common honesty.

At the South these schemes have their origin and are generally advocated. If it be assumed that the leading interests of that part of the Union are correctly represented by Southern statesmen, no one can be at a loss to decide what they are. They revolve around a common centre, which is *the perpetuation of domestic servitude.* And in order to perpetuate it, it is maintained that its extension must keep pace with the extension of the free States. By this means, also, the superior political privileges guaranteed to it in the federal Constitution will be prolonged and extended,—and *this is power.*—Two paramount considerations are thus brought to bear upon the South: the creation of a larger market for slaves, and the consequent enhancement of that species of property; together with the preservation of a preponderating political influence: for the capital invested in that staple production of the South is very great, and the sources of a larger income from it are objects of corresponding interest; while the predominant influence of the South in the management of Public Affairs is a fact of history. Though the

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numerical strength and enterprise of our Country preponderate in the North, unity of purpose and harmony in its prosecution do not prevail here ; while at the South these primary elements of success do prevail ; and *union is strength.* A compact well-disciplined energetic minority will always outmanoeuvre a lukewarm and half-neutral majority. The latter is vulnerable; and under the drill of political tactics, the Southern minority has in the end always carried the day.

It cannot be denied that the statesmanship of our Southern brethren for all practical purposes, is also superior. Their uniform success displays a high degree of executive talent. They are skilled in the science of diplomacy. And if their later statesmen had devoted their abilities to honor the claims of justice and humanity towards the victims of oppression within their own borders, and coöperated with intelligent patriots in every part of the Country in developing our unlimited resources, in securing access to self-improvement to all classes, in cultivating the arts of peace, in repressing the spirit of public misrule and private lawlessness, in discouraging sectional alienation and thereby uniting all sections in an inseparable confraternity, maintaining righteousness and tranquility at home and honor and amity abroad,—this land of ours would have ascended to an unparallelled elevation of material prosperity and moral grandeur—a spectacle of glory and excellency to be admired by the wise and virtuous among all nations, and approved of Heaven.

How painful, alas, is the contrast afforded by our existing condition! Our material prosperity is indeed very great ; and very great also will be the curse it will entail, if we continue to depart from that *Righteousness which exalteth a nation.* But the spirit of sectional discord and alienation prevails to a degree of bitterness which will dash the fabric of our Union into mutilated fragments, and bequeath incalculable evils to posterity, unless the spirit of generous and enlightened patriotism is universally revived and disseminated.

This spirit would lead our countrymen to the acknowledgment of existing evils, and to the adoption of safe and pacific remedies. Attempts to suppress by violence the freedom of debate and of the press would no longer take the place of argument and temperate discussion ; schemes for increasing the number of slave States would be reprobated, and Southern statesmanship would win imperishable laurels by developing the philanthropic views of the patriots of '76 and '87—the eras of our Independence and Constitution—which contemplated not the perpetuation and enlargement, but the early extirpation of slavery.

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That such views, and no other, were entertained by the founders of our Republic, and the framers of our Constitution, is susceptible of proof so clear as to supersede the necessity of argument. The sources of proof are twofold ; first, they are patent upon and woven into the texture of those unequalled documents which immortalized their authors, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which by every fair construction are sublime vindications of the rights of man; and secondly, they appear in the speeches and writings of that day, relating to those documents. Southern statesmen of that era taxed the powers of language to express their abhorrence of slavery, and to describe its enormities ; and indulged in glowing anticipations of the near approach of the day which should witness its extermination. In short the evidence goes to show that the architects of our Union, and the States which entered into it, viewed domestic servitude as a local institution to be confined to the States in which it existed, and in which it was universally supposed it was destined to be speedily abolished.

But " what a fall was there, my countrymen," when in the conflict between philanthropy and oppression, the latter triumphed ! Slavery had acquired an ingeniously constructed lodgement in our great National Covenant, providing for its temporary accommodation, like a tent within a fortress ; and thus indulged, a solid breastwork silently arose within its curtains, the batteries of which have been unmasked upon friends or foes as often as the interests of the system have required. It became a power intrenched within a power, mustering its forces to override all opposition to its schemes of exclusive aggrandizement, relentlessly crushing every assailant, and seeking to abridge every right conflicting with its claims, in order to retain the usurped control of the national citadel. Thus the liberty of discussion, the inviolability of the post-office, the right of petition, the trial by jury, the integrity of contracts and compromises, the public peace, the national treasure, the solemn faith of treaties, have one after another been either invaded or set at naught. It has made national administrations turbulent or tranquil in proportion to their subserviency. Claiming for itself exclusive jurisdiction within its own latitudes, and therefore violently repelling all interference, and simultaneously forcing the broad panoply of the Union over all its interests and schemes, it has become a power totally foreign to the intent and purpose of the National Compact, and should be suppressed. No encroachments, however, should be made upon its constitutional privileges. It is the duty of true patriotism to maintain all the guarantees of the Constitution, and equally to resist every invasion of power and privilege upon natural and prescriptive rights. A just construction of that instrument

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would undoubtedly confine the institution to its privileges of a fractional representation of enslaved "persons," and a lawful return of fugitives from service; and at the same time it would annihilate all its usurpations at a blow.

The great error, however, in an instrument otherwise perfect in its intent and execution, was the recognition of the institution in any form whatever. It should have been left exclusively to the management of the States in which it existed, like other local interests. Its recognition was naturally construed into toleration—toleration was next magnified into sanction—and finally sanction into imperious command. The next error was the permission to carry the peculiar institution into free territory, out of which slave States were subsequently erected. This point being gained, the toleration of the system in the Federal Compact was also gained, from which its national sanction was assumed, and thenceforward it was emboldened to aggrandize itself at the national expense, upon the ground of claims which were never dreamed of before, and which the Free States have never sought for themselves.

It were unjust to a very large class of patriotic men at the South to charge the usurpations of slavery upon them, or to include them among the advocates of propagating the system. They know its evils much better than we, and lament them more bitterly. Why they are doing so little to mitigate them, or to arrest aggressions upon freedom, is a very solemn question for them to answer. Their inaction may be accounted for in part from the common aversion of good men to mingle in political strife; but much more are they deterred by the rule of the slavery propagandists, whose exactions impose total silence upon all opponents, and whose penalty is flight or death. A current in the Slave States has always set against the system: but it is less apparent now than in former times. The violent and unmeasured abuse heaped indiscriminately upon all slaveholders by northern abolitionists has produced little less than unmitigated evil both north and south; while in the slave States its effect has been to rivet the chains of the slave, to prohibit discussion, to excite suspicion against all northern men, to sow dissension among brethren, and to magnify immensely the importance of the pro-slavery party. This party is composed of different shades of the same color: some who justify the system upon economic grounds, as indispensable to the prosperity of the South; some upon political grounds, as indispensable to the balance of power in the Union; and others upon personal grounds, as indispensable to their own promotion. A wing of this party enlists all disunionists, whose intense aim is a Southern Confederacy. Unfortunately for the whole Country, the latter hold the reins of the party, pack its conventions,

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and assume to embody and express the sentiments and purposes of the entire South. Having stifled the utterance of all adverse opinion within their own latitudes by a code more merciless than Draco's, they misrepresent the South before the world.

To say that our southern brethren will resist all interference from without—that they do not believe that the system of slavery involves sin in itself—that they are generally opposed to immediate emancipation, and are unprepared to take a step towards it—or to surrender their slave property without remuneration—is not to misrepresent them. And much solid argument can be advanced to sustain nearly all of these positions. But to declare that they universally favor the schemes of the ultra pro-slavery party in their midst—that the perpetuation and enlargement of the institution is the ordained and deliberate policy of the South—that to secure these aims they justify the invasion of Free State rights and the violation of the territory of foreign nations—and that they are prepared to secede from the Union if these plots cannot be promoted in its bosom—is to impeach the patriotism and defame the humanity of a numerous class of our Southern brethren : it is to cast an ineffaceable blot upon the civilization of the nineteenth century, and a most foul reproach upon Christianity.

When the party of the RIGHT is inaugurated at the South, the power of the propagandists will vanish into thin air. The aim of all true patriots at the North should be to aid our brethren as much as possible, by allaying all needless irritation upon the subject which has occasioned more disturbance than all other subjects combined. Let counsels of peace prevail. Let abuse and retaliation be discountenanced. Let brotherly love continue and abound, bearing one another's burden. LET A GENEROUS OFFER OF THE NATIONAL TREASURE BE MADE *to assist any State in bearing the burden of emancipation, whenever it is prepared for it.* All this can be done without the sacrifice of principle, but in obedience to the highest dictates of reason, conscience and love : for the same motives will lead to an unyielding posture of resistance to the further encroachments of the propagandists of slavery. This course would ultimately tranquilize the Country, heal the fraternal ties which are now strained and lacerated, and cement all sections in an indissoluble union. LOVE IS THE GREAT PACIFICATOR OF THE WORLD.

Is it too much to hope for the adoption of some such expedients for internal peace ? It is visionary to hope for it, under prevailing influences. But little can be expected from Congress besides the increase of our dangers. The incoming Administration will be beset on every hand by the propagandist party, and most likely be prevailed upon to favor some of their sinister designs. The newspaper

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press might do much to promote this beneficent end. A free Press is an agent of incalculable power : but the press is in one sense too free—free from moral restraint—free enough to be licentious when its conductors are venal and mercenary. Many of them are far above this reproach : but it is nevertheless too true that the press cannot be relied on, until public opinion bid it speak for righteousness and peace. The teachers of Religion can exert a very powerful influence upon the tranquil adjustment of these towering difficulties : but not by embarking upon the turbid streams of partizan politics: they would thus totally defeat the end in view. The nature of their calling conducts them to the fountain of infinite Wisdom, and to the highest seat of Authority. Their teacher is God in Christ, the Lawgiver and Ruler of all nations ; and their commission is to teach whatever He has commanded. The Will of God is the only ground of human obligation, and the supreme guide of human duty ; and from this grand fact in the divine government arises MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD, extending to all motives and to all moral action. Hence the discharge of civil and political obligations in the fear of God, to whom people and rulers must give account, forms a legitimate theme in the exposition of the Will and the Word of God.

This thought conveys us to the last topic proposed for our discussion.

One of the leading controversies of the age may be termed a question of Government : the government of the individual man, the government of the nation, the government of the great family of empires. This question involves LAW in its broadest sense—the great code which should regulate individuals and nations. And as the idea of Law implies liability of infringement, this again leads to the doctrine of RIGHTS, which law specifies and invests with sanctions, the enjoyment of which it is the object of good government to secure to every man. But as law can only define and ratify those rights, as government can only administer the law, and as man can no more invent his own rights than he can create himself, the character of those rights must be sought in man's moral nature, because the enjoyment of rights constitutes happiness, and happiness can be found only in the proper regulation of the moral faculties. This again leads to the consideration of Moral Laws, the sum and practice of which is *Religion*, the author of which is GOD.

The inquiry has not been so much respecting the *form* of Government, as the *spirit* of it: for it is clearly true that there can be an absolute democracy,* as well as an absolute monarchy ; they are

* I use the term *Democracy* in its abstract sense, and in no respect to designate any political party.

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essentially the same in spirit—governments of capricious *will* in distinction from permanent *Law*, and differ only in this, that the former is a far more reckless and atrocious despotism. It is less hazardous to live under one Ahab or Nero, than to tremble under a community of tyrants, an irresponsible and lawless mob. The spirit of good government is therefore found in the administration of just and benign laws, instead of the dictation of mere human impulses, whether it be the dictation of one man, or many. And one result of this inquiry seems to be the adoption of the principle among all wise statesmen, "that the prosperity or adversity of a nation is made up of the happiness or misery of the individuals composing that nation; and the rejection of the old idea of a *public* interest distinct from *individual* interest." Another gratifying result of this great inquiry is found in the shape given to International Law, being moulded entirely by the preceding rule of individual welfare: "The same rules of morality which hold together men in families, and which form families into commonwealths, also link together these commonwealths as members of the great society of mankind."*

Here then is disclosed a department of personal obligation too much overlooked. It discovers a National Righteousness founded alone upon PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. This was the culminating point proposed to us by our fathers in the birth-day of our Republic. Our Country is singled out by Providence and by the consent of Christendom, to supply a practical solution of the question *whether man is capable of self-government.* Every fragment of our institutions, from the foundation to the topstone, is laid in this grand cementing principle. Hence every citizen is constituted a guardian of the edifice. Our fathers went forth to erect that edifice, trusting in God. They laid its broad foundations in the eternal principles of Righteousness, which are the basis of His throne. If we now depart from Him, and *regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He will destroy us and not build us up.*

The sad fact cannot be disguised that in a national capacity, we are banishing Religion from the State, and with it all sense of responsibility to God. In our eagerness to divorce the State from the Church, (which ought never to be united,) we have confounded the warping dogmas of sectaries with the pure principles of Faith and Worship, which are at once universal in their scope and at the same time obligatory upon every man. We are coming to regard the State purely as a political organization, independent of all permanent moral obligation, and dependent alone upon the sovereign will of the people, however changeable the expression of that will

* Sir James Macintosh: Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations.

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may be; and the consequence is, that from our halls of legislation, our judicial tribunals, our business and our recreations, we are divorcing the transcendant gift of God, and confining it to the cloisters of private life. Voters and representatives, magistrates and jurors throught the country, are alike becoming regardless of Him "who doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." The details are deplorably obvious to every intelligent observer. While we have extended our territory, multiplied our numbers, augmented our wealth, enlarged our knowledge, and magnified our political importance, we have by no means increased in *the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom*, nor in that *righteousness which exalteth a nation.* Can national justice or honor long survive? Can the integrity of our institutions be maintained?

It is easy to distinguish the *principles* of a system from the *tendencies* imparted to that system by its administrators: though beneficent in design, it may be made pernicious in effect. Theoretically, we appeal to the Supreme Ruler as the arbiter of the rectitude of our intentions: practically, we have no national conscience. Theoretically, the fundamental principle of our republic is Righteousness: practically, the leading rule of public action is Expediency.

To these deplorable errors can be traced all the perversions of our political system. They cannot be charged against the principles of our institutions: if these were consistently applied, results directly the reverse of these evils would be realized. But they arise out of *our mode* of working the system of representation, which merges the authority of the many into the hands of the few.

One of the evils incidental to the system of representation, is the assignment of the individual conscience along with the delegation of individual authority. Hence, men who are conscientious in personal concerns, do not consider that they in common with their fellow-citizens, are responsible for the acts of their representatives. We are not indeed responsible for the wisdom or the folly of the representative; but we are responsible for the official exercise of these, *because we have chosen him to act in our place.* This principle invariably obtains in courts of justice, and in all business transactions.* A commercial house is held responsible for the official acts of their agent: they reap the profits, or bear the loss. They do not easily escape even by showing that he acted beyond his instructions; for in making this clear, a certain degree of blame attaches to their employing an unfaithful agent. In short, this principle is recognized in every form of government among men, *because* its foundation is discovered in the moral government of God. It holds peculiar

* Facit per alium facit per se.

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prominence in the republican system, under which the people claim to be the source of political power. We are therefore liable for the official proceedings of our representative. We are not morally accountable for his overt act—that is a matter of personal responsibility with himself: but we are justly liable in all cases for the effects which flow from the exercise of his official functions. National honor exacts the faithful discharge of the obligations growing out of this system, or the provision of a remedy consistent with justice. Nevertheless the opinion is widely prevalent that the people are not responsible for the mal-administration of Public Affairs; so that if a pernicious measure be adopted, although the public faith is pledged, the people may repudiate it, and declare its solemn obligations void.

We have, in a general sense, no national conscience, and as electors, no political conscience. The false maxim is virtually adopted, "all is fair in politics." And the man who displays the most devotion to party, is the party's idol. This diminishes the responsibility of the representative to the entire body of his constituency, and transfers it to the mere bidding of a faction. It gives a license to partisan intrigue, which stoops to any baseness in order to secure an ascendency. He becomes a pliant instrument to carry out a partial and selfish policy. Hence we have a partisan responsibility distinct from and paramount to all moral responsibility: least of all is any deference shown to the will of God, who ordains the powers that be, and who holds all people and rulers accountable for their participation in the execution of those powers. It does not require much sagacity to foresee that unless this base servility to party is overthrown by a conscientious regard to political obligations on the part both of electors and representatives, our offices, like the sceptre in the days of degenerate Rome, will pass to the most unworthy persons; and the body politic, thus disordered in every part, will hasten through a quick consumption to an early grave. It may be stimulated to a factitious activity by political quackery; but according to an inevitable law, it will soon vibrate to the opposite extreme, leaving it more exhausted than ever. It may assume unwonted strength, and make great efforts on great occasions; but they will be like the spasms of a strong man in the hour of dissolution.

Our system of government is in no other sense democratic beyond the first step at the ballot-box, than as public opinion gives shape to our legislation and the administration of our laws. Our officers when chosen, are for the time being, in theory at least, the organs of public sentiment, being the choice of a majority; and in no other way can we direct the policy of our government. Here democracy

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ends; and here commences a complicated representative system, regulated by our constitutions and laws. And this is well. It is our chief barrier against the licentiousness of a domineering mob. The voice of the majority is the expression of the prevailing sentiment: but a corrupt majority may overleap that barrier; for a depraved public opinion is a remorseless tyrant, ruling its constituency with a rod of iron, and compelling candidates for office to kneel at its confessional and do its penances at the sacrifice of manly independence, conscience and honor. Public opinion can be enlightened and regulated by right reason; but it is idle to attempt to coerce it. You can purify the atmosphere, but you cannot control the wind. Moral power is the only effectual purifier of public sentiment; but it must be applied at the sources of opinion. It must operate beneath the "platforms" of parties, which consolidate individuals into masses, like a conglomerate rock. A sense of moral obligation will nourish self-respect and personal independence; and these are all elements of moral courage. We are encircled by influences which require the exercise of moral intrepidity in every lover of his country. Our foes are not without, but within. We are threatened by those internal tendencies to decay which from the imperfection of human government assail the organization of every nation, and which if not frustrated, sooner or later accomplish its destruction. Our institutions, from their very nature, demand our watchful exertions in order to sustain them. And they must be sustained by moral power. They have no impregnable citadels, surrounded by bayonets and artillery and mercenary battalions. Their fortress is the nation's heart, their strength the nation's moral power. We have not now to establish them: our age of martial heroism accomplished that; but shall they be maintained and perpetuated? Many of our wisest and most venerated countrymen, who once harbored no doubt of the permanency of our institutions, have been forced, in view of actual evils and prevailing tendencies, to entertain the most anxious forebodings.

To meet and master these difficulties requires a special direction of thought and action among all good men. *Every citizen should be led to feel that he is responsible to God and to his countrymen for the delegated as well as the personal exercise of his rights and privileges.* Upon this single pivot turns the permanency of any popular government. This alone can preserve the individuality of every man, and imbue him with the principles and the spirit of Self-Government. This alone can establish a public national political Conscience. Acting under this conviction, electors would no sooner employ forgers to manage their pecuniary affairs, than they would vote for incompetent and corrupt men to legislate for them; they would no

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times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, in which multitudes shall participate, and all alienation be lost in that blest tie which is indestructible, the tie of Christian fellowship and love. *Then shall our peace be as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea!*

The Law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD *are* true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.—*Psalm* xix: 7–11.

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